

THE 1783 TREATY OF PARIS, BETTS-614

A CENSUS STUDY

by

ROBERT L. RODRIGUEZ AND TONY J. LOPEZ

The 1783 Treaty of Paris medal, listed in C. Wyllys Betts *American Colonial History Illustrated by Colonial Medals* as Betts-614, is a controversial medal in that we do not know for sure where, when or who made it. The cataloging of its origin has changed over the years, as shown in the October 14, 2003 Stack's lot 10 description: "The cataloguer suggested in the description of Norweb: 2459 that the piece was American made ca. 1790. On reflection, he feels that this was incorrect, and that the piece, as it appears, is a British medal that copies the reverse type of the Continental Dollar that was made in September 1783 to celebrate the end of the American-British war."¹ Whereas Laurence Brown, who was given the privilege of being able to inspect Her Majesty the Queen's numismatic collection at Windsor Castle, states: "The very crude medal for the Peace of Versailles in 1783 was struck in America—the English saw little to celebrate in the loss of the thirteen colonies so that no comparable English medal exists for this occasion."² However, in that volume's description of medal #256, The British Museum's Betts-614 medal, this assertion is then qualified by: "as probably struck in America."³ This view was reiterated in Stack's Bowers Galleries, November 2015, lot 23089: "It is the opinion of this cataloguer that Betts-614 was struck in America for an American audience." And he explains: "The fact that no other English medals exist to commemorate the Treaty of Paris suggests that English medalists and toy makers did not foresee demand for souvenirs marking the treaty." What is accurate about all these citations is that they are educated speculations. In this census review, it is our goal to correct and clarify many misconceptions and errors.

Since its first-known appearance in the December 1871 W. H. Strobbridge auction of the Charles M. Clay, M.D. Collection, lot 872, the Betts-614 has captured the attention of numismatic collectors, with a reverse design that has been linked to the 1776 Continental Dollar. In this census study, we highlight a few of the auction catalog descriptions that are, in our

opinion, incorrect, exaggerated or quite "liberal," in their use of terminology to describe this medal. For example, Stack's Bowers Galleries, November 2020, lot 4027, states, "...a reverse that is *an exact copy* of the Continental 'dollar,' *clearly rendered by the same hand* and struck in the same composition, all finished with *an edge device that is essentially identical* to that seen on the Continental dollars [emphasis added]."⁵ Or in the November 2015, Stack's Bowers Galleries, lot 23089, "The reverse of this medal, *an exacting copy* [emphasis added] of the reverse of the 1776 Continental dollar, suggests that this medal was struck for an American audience." While Eric Goldstein asserts, "Its reverse design is the *same as that on most Continental Dollars* [emphasis added]."⁶ Additionally, he claims the medal is from England, without ever offering any supporting documentation—neither did the cataloger of Stack's October 14, 2003, lot 10.

In this census study of 16 medals, eight with edge photos, we show the Betts-614 reverse is, at best, only similar to that of the Continental Dollar. The medal's reverse is in no way an exact copy of the Continental Dollar. Four examples, including the finest Betts-614, have a twin-leaf edge design which poorly imitates the edge of the Spanish 8 Reales Pillar type and the Continental Dollar. Furthermore, a review of the various edge photos demonstrates that there are vast differences in the edge designs among the medals themselves. Recent estimates place the population between 12 and 15 versus an estimate of two from the

1. Stack's Public Auction Sale. John J. Ford, Jr. Collection Part I: Coins, Medals and Currency. October 14, 2003. New York, NY: 30.

2. Laurence Brown, *British Historical Medals 1760-1960*, Volume 1 (1980): p. xiv.

3. *Ibid.*, 61.

4. Stack's Bowers Galleries. The November 2015 Baltimore Auction: U.S. Coins. November 2015. Baltimore, MD: 246.

5. Stack's Bowers Galleries. The E Pluribus Unum Collection Part 2: Colonial Coins & Washingtoniana. November 11, 2020. Newport Beach, CA: 10.

6. Eric Goldstein, "The Myth of the Continental Dollar, Part 2," *The Numismatist* (July 2018): 44.

1871 W.H. Stobridge catalog, lot 872, for the Clay collection; therefore, we believe this image census of 16 examples is the most complete ever assembled. The presentation of all 16 together, obverse and reverse, provides a detailed and easy comparison of these medals side-by-side. We have ranked them according to our estimate of quality based upon numismatic grading standards.

The study is broken into three parts: First, cataloging those without edge photos; Second, those that have edge photos; and finally, a reverse photo comparison between a Betts-614 medal and a Newman 1-C Continental Dollar that definitively highlights their respective differences. Our comments detail these differences. Edge devices for two of the finest Betts-614 medals are then compared to those of the Continental Dollars in all three metallic compositions (silver, pewter, and brass) and clearly show how crude they are in their execution. The contrasting catalog descriptions help to demonstrate the differences in opinion about this medal. We have emphasized phrasing that helps to highlight these differences.

For those examples where we were able to obtain metrological data, weight and diameter data varied considerably, with weights ranging from 341.9 to 372.1 grains, while diameters were between 35.3 and 41.1 mm. Though our sample size is small, we view the data dispersion as being an indication of quality control issues, particularly as seen in the case of the noticeably out of round Yale medal planchet. To place these weights in proper perspective, we turned to John Kleeberg's study of pewter Continental Dollars that encompassed 115 coins, where weights ranged between 210 and 305 grains, with a peak in the number of coins at the interval of 255-259.9 grains.⁷ As such, pewter Continental Dollars weigh materially less than the Betts-614.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Having reviewed all 16 images, we are of the opinion that the Betts-614 is of an American origin. This is based upon how crudely it was fabricated and its design elements that celebrate American Independence: However, it also incorporates the use of an incorrect date in exergue; September 4th, rather than the correct

Treaty of Paris date of September 3rd. We view it as being of a contemporaneous manufacture with the formal ending of hostilities between England and the colonies, given this date error. Those in Europe certainly had earlier and more accurate information regarding the Treaty's specifics; thus, we believe the date error is an indication of misinformation that could have been the result of information traveling through greater time and distance—all the way to America. A comparison of two of the finest Betts-614 medals versus Continental Dollars in all metallic compositions clearly demonstrates how rudimentary these medals are in their execution. When comparing edge devices, the finest known example at The British Museum is rough in its execution of the twin-leaf design when compared to those of the Continental Dollar and the Spanish 8 Reales Pillar type. Three other examples of this edge design are barely recognizable, two have plain edges and one is difficult to discern. The American Numismatic Society medal's edge is completely different from all others, in that it has the letters "VA" counterstamped in two different directions. We can only speculate about the meaning of the abbreviation "VA."

We believe this census study helps to eliminate any misunderstandings that may have developed because of incorrect and/or presumptive catalog descriptions, as well as from imprecise numismatic characterizations. Our photographic comparisons clearly demonstrate the reverse design imitates and was inspired by the reverse of the Continental Dollar, but it is in no way the "same" or "an exact copy," according to some catalog descriptions. Given this medal's rudimentary characteristics and its iconic patriotic American design elements, along with its incredible rarity, we view it as a truly-historic medal that attempts to capture the nature and importance of this monumental period in American history that would mean so much more to an American audience. In contrast, the English saw little reason to celebrate the loss of the colonies. For these reasons, we are convinced it is of an American origin.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This census would not have been possible without the generous assistance of several people. Anne E. Bentley, Massachusetts Historical Society, Curator Arts and Artifacts, provided images of the MHS medal. She was also instrumental in our being able to reach out

7. John M. Kleeberg, "The Continental Dollar: British Medals or American or American Coins?" *The Journal of Early American Numismatics* 1, 2 (December 2018): 169.

to Thomas Hockenhull, The British Museum, Coins and Medals, Curator, who went to great lengths to provide us with edge photos of the British Museum's medal. Dr. Jesse C. Kraft, American Numismatic Society, Assistant Curator of American Numismatics, provided images of the American Numismatic Society's medal, as well as the edge images of the Yale medal. We also thank him for his helpful comments and review. Jesse MacLeod, George Washington's Mount Vernon Museum, Associate Curator, went to

special lengths to remove the museum's medal from public display so that it could be photographed for this study. Skyler Liechty, President of the Medal Collectors of America, contributed images of his medal. Heritage Auctions provided excellent images of the Liechty and Partrick medals, particularly the edge photos. Finally, we thank Mark Borckardt, Heritage Auctions, Senior Numismatist/Cataloger, for his helpful comments and review.

OBVERSE QUALITY RANKING



BRITISH MUSEUM



FORD



RESOLUTE



ADAMS



ROLFE



YALE



MOUNT VERNON



MASS. HIST. SOCIETY



ADAMS/LIECHTY



AMER. NUMIS. SOCIETY



PCGS COINFACTS



LA RIVIERE



PARTRICK/RESOLUTE



NEWMAN



GARRETT



NASCA

REVERSE QUALITY RANKING



BRITISH MUSEUM



FORD



RESOLUTE



ADAMS



ROLFE



YALE



MOUNT VERNON



MASS. HIST. SOCIETY



ADAMS/LIECHTY



AMER. NUMIS. SOCIETY



PCGS COINFACTS



LARIVIERE



PARTRICK/RESOLUTE



NEWMAN



GARRETT



NASCA

MEDALS WITHOUT EDGE PHOTOS

THE JOHN FORD MEDAL

October 14, 2003, Stack's, Lot 10, \$26,450, AU, "The Second Finest Known."

Weight: 353.6 grains. Diameter: 39.4 mm.

- "Usual twin olive leaf edge device..."
- "The reverse is the type of the Continental Dollar of the Newman reverse C, which shows New Hampshire at the top. The cataloguer suggested in the description of Norweb: 2459 that the piece was American made ca. 1790. On reflection, he feels that this was incorrect and the piece is as it appears, a British medal that copies the reverse type of the Continental Dollar that was made in September 1783 to celebrate the end of the American-British war."
- Comment: Our census review leads us to disagree with the second bullet point.



Ford



THE JOHN W. ADAMS MEDAL

November 6, 2015, Stack's Bowers Galleries, lot 23089, \$17,625, Choice EF.

Weight: 341.9 grains. Diameter: 38.5 mm.

- "The reverse of this medal, *an exacting copy* [emphasis added] of the reverse of the 1776 Continental dollar, suggests that this medal was struck for an American audience."
- "The edge displays a twin leaf-leaf pattern that also imitates that of the Continental Dollar, which was in turn borrowed from the edge of a Spanish milled dollar or 8 reales."
- "The quality of its execution, both in terms of die work and minting production, hardly compares to even the crudest of British-made medals of the era. The edge device of this medal is particularly unusual. Not only did medals rarely have any edge device at all in this era, an edge device that is a *near twin* [emphasis added] to that found on Continental dollars makes this medal really, truly unusual. The designer of this medal was not only familiar with Continental dollars, but consciously copied its edge, an edge that was itself a direct copy of that found on Spanish milled dollars of the Pillar type, commonplace in American circulation though by 1783 they had not been struck for over a decade."
- "This medal would be easier to understand if the reverse die was actually used on Continental dollars, but it was not."
- "It is the opinion of this cataloguer that Betts-614 was struck in America for an American audience. The technical considerations of striking, edge device, composition, and planchet production

fit better in the context of an American minting operation than one in London or Birmingham... The fact that no other English medals exist to commemorate the Treaty of Paris suggests that English medalist and toy makers did not foresee demand for souvenirs marking the treaty.”

- The primary evidence against American origin for this is the fact that many of the known specimens have an English provenance. This may not mean much, as most of those provenance chains begin in England in the mid to late 20th century, a century after Englishmen had been actively collecting many Betts-listed pieces as part of cabinets of English medals.”

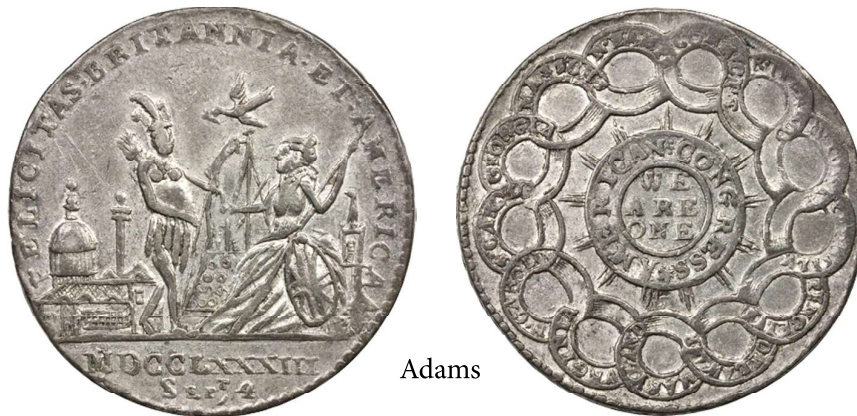
December 1984, Baldwin's, via John J. Ford, Jr.

April 19-20, 1905, S. H. & H. Chapman, Charles Morris Collection, Lot 352, \$5, Fine.

- “Same design as rev. of last.” (Pewter Continental Dollar).
- “Same size of last lot and of similar workmanship. See plate.”

June 25-27, 1890, New York Coin & Stamp Co., Lorin G. Parmelee, Lot 578, \$12, VG.

- “R copied after that of lot 573...”
- Lot 573, a silver 1776 Continental Dollar, Newman 1-C, is now included in The Resolute Americana Collection.



Adams



Photo comparison at Stack's Bowers Galleries Lot Viewing November 2015. Norweb/Resolute medal finer than the Adams medal based upon visual inspection and it is approximately 1.5 mm larger.

THE STRICKLAND NEVILLE ROLFE MEDAL

May 4, 2010, Baldwin's, Lot 1589, \$13,115+BP, XF. Weight: 341.5 grains.

- "A few infinitesimal edge imperfections, dark pewter color..."
- No comments were included about its edge design or its relationship to the Continental Dollar.



THE PCGS COINFACTS MEDAL

Listed and pictured on the CoinFacts website as VF30, PCGS ID#541631.

No additional information was provided about its provenance.



THE LUCIEN M. LARIVIERE MEDAL

May 21, 2001, Bowers and Merena Galleries, Lot 1112, \$11,500, "Fine or so."

Weight: 372.1 grains. Diameter: 41.1 mm.

- "Ornamented edge imitative of Spanish 8 Reales and 1776 Continental Currency antecedents."
- "This important medal is a part of the Treaty of Paris subseries of Betts medals, and is unique among them for its probable American origin."
- "This incorrect date [exergue features "SEPT 4"] lends credence to the theory of its American origin..."
- "The engraving is amateurish and unsigned. The reverse is imitative of the reverse of the 1776 Continental Currency pieces, configuring the rings *identically* [emphasis added] to Newman's reverse C though the dies are not the same."

- “Though there is no absolute proof of American origin or distribution, there would have been an emotional gravity and especial satisfaction to Americans by juxtaposing the announcement of legal American independence by the Treaty of Paris with the 13 linked rings that were so intimately connected to the Revolutionary cause. For this reason, we are most comfortable with the attribution of this medal as being produced in America for an American audience.”

- Comment: Note the comment about the rings which is incorrect. See commentary on reverse comparisons between Betts-614 and the Continental Dollar.

July 31, 1972, Private treaty from Eugene Leipman.

May 1953, CSNA, lot 1304.



THE ERIC NEWMAN MEDAL

November 15, 2014, Heritage Auctions, Lot 3042, \$9,987.50, F12 NGC.

Weight: 345.4 grains, 85% tin, 9% lead, 2% copper.

- “The reverse is a copy of the Newman reverse C of the Continental Dollar...”
- No mention of an edge design.
- “Probably the only medal made in America to commemorate this event.” Note by Eric P. Newman.

Ex: “Col.” E.H.R. Green, Green Estate; Partnership of Eric P. Newman/B.G. Johnson d.b.a St. Louis Stamp & Coin Co.; Eric P. Newman @ \$35.



THE GARRETT MEDAL

November 11, 2020, Stack's Bowers, Lot 4027, \$13,200, "EF Details-Damaged PCGS."

Weight: 345.9 grains. Diameter: 39.1 mm.

- Compare this catalog description to Bowers and Rudy, Garrett October 1980, Part III, Lot 1494: "...a reverse that is an exact copy [emphasis added] of the Continental 'dollar,' clearly rendered by the same hand [emphasis added] and struck in the same composition, all finished with an edge device that is essentially identical [emphasis added] to that seen on the Continental dollars."

Bowers and Rudy, Garrett, October 1980, Part III, Lot 1494, \$3,750.

- Note the differences in the description of this same medal: "*The reverse design of this piece is styled after the 1776 Continental dollar (Newman reverse C)* [emphasis added]."

- "The 1783 Peace medal does not utilize the reverse from a 1776 Continental dollar, and thus, it is not mulling."

- "The specimen offered here is struck in tin alloy and has an ornamented edge somewhat similar [emphasis added] to that used on the Continental dollars."



THE NASCA MEDAL

November 1987, NASCA, Lot 220, \$115, Good. “Holed and plugged at 5:00...”

- No edge description.
- “Continental Dollar reverse, copying Newman’s ‘C’ reverse.”
- “This rare medal of silver dollar size, was struck in America. It is historically significant in that *it proves* [emphasis added] that the 1776 Continental Dollars were, as well, struck in America and *accorded official recognition* [emphasis added].”
- **Comment:** We believe this lot description overstates the connection between the Betts-614 and the status of the Continental Dollar.



MEDALS WITH EDGE PHOTOS

BRITISH MUSEUM

Weight: 367.14 grains. Diameter: 40 mm.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_M-4883

1860, “We can trace its (Betts-614) provenance to around 1860-the year in which the British Museum acquired a large collection of medals (and this one, most likely) from Edward Hawkins (1780-1867). Hawkins was a British Museum employee and numismatic scholar. His lasting contribution to the subject *Medallic Illustrations*, published posthumously, which remains the first point of reference for British medals to 1760.” Thomas Hockenhull, The British Museum, Coins and Medals, Curator. Email, May 23, 2021.



Edge of British Museum Betts-614



Edge of Spanish Pillar 8 Reales

Comment: Twin leaf edge design of the finest Betts-614 emulates a Spanish Colonial 8 Reales Pillar type but it is crude by comparison

THE RESOLUTE AMERICANA MEDAL

January 2015, Heritage Auctions, lot 5846, \$88,125, AU55 NGC,
Resolute Americana Collection. Weight: 358.6 grains.
Diameter: Horizontal, 39.4 mm; Vertical, 40.3 mm. Thickness: 3.1 mm.
Composition: 93% tin, 2% antimony, 1% lead.

- “The reverse of this medal resembles the Continental dollar reverse design, although there are clear differences.”
- “*The ornamented edge resembles the twin-leaves edge* [emphasis added] of the Continental dollars, although there are clear differences.”
- “Just over a dozen examples of the Treaty of Paris medal survive, and most of those are lower grade pieces.”

Bowers and Merena, March 1988, Lot 2459, \$15,400.

- “Ornamented edge, resembling that found on the Continental currency dollars, pennies, and pewter specimens; deriving ultimately from the staple of the Spanish colonial 8 Reales. Other edge styles are known on the Treaty of Paris medal, namely: plain edge (Yale University, ex Betts); lettered (per Bett’s description of the Clay specimen). A lettered edge specimen was once in the Bushnell Collection, but has been lost since the late 1880s. Appleton owned an ornamented edge specimen at one time.”
- “Reverse type: said to be modeled on Newman’s reverse C of the Continental currency coinage, with New Hampshire placed to the right of Massachusetts, at the top of the die.”
- “Both the die work band axis suggest U.S. manufacture, not British.”



Resolute
Americana

Comment: Edge is a very poor rendition of those of the Continental Dollar or the Spanish 8 Reales Pillar type. Bowers and Merena, March 1988, states, “Ornamented edge, resembling that found on the Continental currency dollars...,” which we believe somewhat overstates the similarity. See Betts-614 Edge Comparisons Versus Continental Dollar.

YALE UNIVERSITY

2001, Yale University Art Gallery. Weight: 364.4 grains. Diameter: 41.1 mm.

1887-2001, Yale University Library, Numismatic Collection.

1887, Bequest of Charles Wyllys Betts, B.A. 1867, M.A. 1871.

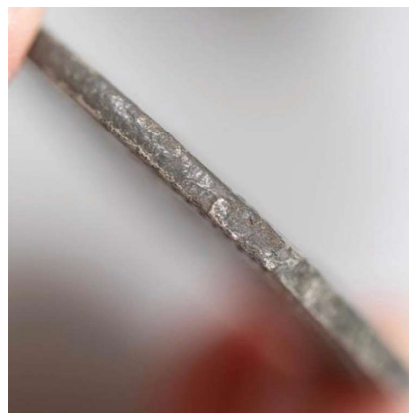
June 1882, S.H. & H. Chapman, Bushnell, Lot 311, \$2, "Fine." "Excessively rare, four or five known."

December 1871, W.H. Strobbridge, Charles Clay, M.D., Lot 872, \$31.

- "The rev. is similar in design and execution to the ordinary Continental Currency, yet it is from a special die. The edge somewhat irregular and imperfectly milled, the impression and preservation fine."

- "Note.—This medal is so nearly unique that after the most diligent inquiry I can learn of the existence of but one other, which is in the collection of Mr. Appleton. I ought to state here that Dr. Clay thinks the edge bears the inscription *Continental Currency* faintly impressed on it, a slight oxidation, not extending to the surface, making the words very indistinct."

- Comment: Obviously, the last sentence is an exaggeration, as a view of the edge photos demonstrates this is not the case.



Comment: Described as having a Plain Edge

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON MUSEUM

1985 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley DeForest Scott, Object Number M-3175

Weight: 357.3 grains. Diameter: 35.29 mm, 35.48 mm, 35.20 mm.

<https://emuseum.mountvernon.org/objects/6437/peace-dollar;jsessionid=FB25EB1FAEE35EABCA3EE4F8A00CB601>



Comment: In our opinion, edge is basic and crude compared to that of the Continental Dollar or the Spanish 8 Reales Pillar type.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1905 Bequest from William Summer Appleton, Sr. Weight 347.2 grains. Diameter: 39.56 mm.



MHS



Comment: In our opinion, edge is basic and crude compared to that of the Continental Dollar or the Spanish 8 Reales Pillar type.

THE ADAMS/LIECHTY MEDAL

2014, Private Treaty from John Adams to Skyler Liechty. Weight: 354.9 grains. Diameter: 37 mm.

1982, Theodore L. Craige, formerly George Fuld



Adams/
Liechty



Comment: Skyler Liechty, "Difficult to discern an edge design. Parts of it look like there is a pattern that was worn down considerably, then others appear almost smooth. It is not consistent either way."

THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

October 1933, Charles P. Senter, Wayte Ramond.

Weight: 350.67. Diameter: 40.29 mm. Thickness: 2.61 mm.



Comment: Dr. Jesse C. Kraft, American Numismatic Society, “There are 12 VAs that go around the edge.” Tony Lopez also noted that the VA is written in two different directions. We can only speculate as to what the “VA” means.

THE PARTRICK/RESOLUTE AMERICANA MEDAL

June 17, 2021, Heritage Auctions, Lot 3261, \$18,000, F15 NGC, Resolute Americana Collection.

Weight: 355.4 grains. Diameter: 39.5 mm. Composition: 93% tin, 2% antimony, 1% lead.

- “The reverse imitates the Continental dollar reverse.”
- No edge description.



Partrick
Resolute
Americana



Comment: Mark Borckardt, Heritage Auctions, Senior Cataloger/Senior Numismatist, “I viewed the edge under magnification and there is nothing to see/image other than a small planchet crack.”

CONTINENTAL DOLLAR COMPARISONS

REVERSE

Betts-614 Reverse Comparisons Versus Continental Dollar C-Type Reverse
Two of the Finest Betts-614



British
Museum



Resolute
Americana

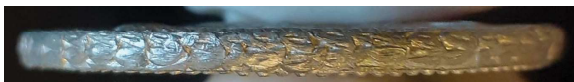


Resolute Americana
Newman 1-C MS65 NGC
Continental Dollar - Pewter

Comment: Note reverse differences between Betts-614 and Continental Dollar Reverse C. The sun ray design is virtually continuous on the Continental Dollar, unlike that of the Betts-614. The letter spacing was corrected on the Betts-614 and it also begins from a different location by comparing the "C" in CONGRESS to the "W" in WE. Three dots and a star are located at 12 and 6 on the medal and not on the Continental Dollar. The rings with the state's names are irregular and oval on the Betts-614, and more perfectly circular and accurately accomplished on the Continental Dollar. The order of the states differs in that Pennsylvania follows New York clockwise on the Betts-614, while it follows New Jersey on the Continental Dollar. One cannot even discern the name of New Jersey on the Betts-614.

EDGE

Betts-614 Edge Comparisons Versus Continental Dollars Two of the Finest Betts-614



British Museum



Resolute Americana



Resolute Americana
Newman 1-A MS63 NGC



Resolute Americana
Newman 1-C MS65 NGC



Resolute Americana
Newman 3-D MS62 NGC

Comment: Edge of Betts-614 very crude, even on the British Museum's medal, versus those of the Continental Dollar.